

# VISIBILITY MATTERS

## Higher Education and Teacher Preparation in Illinois: A Web-based Assessment of LGBTQ Presence

### Making the Invisible Visible

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How visible are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ) issues in programs that prepare educators to work in schools across Illinois? Which institutions include sexual orientation and gender identity<sup>1</sup> in their policies? Are sexual orientation and gender identity identified in teacher education programs' conceptual frameworks? The Pre-Professional Preparation Project (P-Project)<sup>2</sup> seeks to answer these questions and to report the results via the Visibility Matters report cards. Using only data available from university and college websites, the Visibility Matters report cards evaluate the public face of pre-professional educator preparation programs across Illinois.

### Visibility Matters Methods

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To evaluate the public face of the 57 pre-professional teacher education programs in Illinois, we decided to examine their websites. Although website data do not show the day-to-day activities of college campuses, they are frequently the information that is most readily available to prospective students, particularly queer students who may be reluctant to talk about LGBTQ issues with college counselors or university officials. In short, online searches offer students an anonymous way to assess whether or not a campus is a comfortable place for queer and questioning young people, has an established "out" queer community, and prepares future teachers to engage with queer students and families in their classrooms and curricula.

Members of the P-Project evaluated the websites of Illinois teacher education programs from January 2007 to January 2008. Our analyses included macro-level indicators such as university-wide non-discrimination policies and LGBTQ centers, offices, or student organizations, as well as education specific indicators such as sexual orientation and gender identity being included in the conceptual framework or dispositions documents from the teacher preparation program or included in course content. In March 2008, schools and programs were revisited and "graded" according to the following rubric. Importantly, during the summer of 2008, a fact checker revisited the teacher education websites to verify our point allocation and correct any errors.

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<sup>1</sup> Sexual orientation – Who you are attracted to sexually, emotionally, romantically, and/or intellectually; Gender identity – A person's sense or experience of belonging to a particular gender category as a woman (girl) or a man (boy), and where a person feels they fit in society's man/woman structure (Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> The Pre-Professional Preparation Project is a coalition of faculty from colleges and universities across Illinois that prepare educators and is supported by the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance. For more information on the P-Project or the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance see [www.illinoissafeschools.org](http://www.illinoissafeschools.org).

## Grading Rubric

Below, SO indicates sexual orientation and GI, gender identity.

### University Policies (10 points)

Points are allocated if these terms are included in any non-discrimination, anti-harassment, and/or affirmative action university-wide policies.

- Ⓐ 5 points for SO
- Ⓐ 5 points for GI

### Student Rights and Responsibilities (20 points)

Points are allocated if these terms are included in university-wide documents that pertain to student rights and codes of conduct.

- Ⓐ 10 points for SO
- Ⓐ 10 points for GI

### College of Education (40 points)

Points are allocated if these terms are included in the conceptual framework or dispositions documents in the institutions' teacher preparation programs and/or departments.

- Ⓐ 20 points for SO
- Ⓐ 20 points for GI

### Campus Life (30 points)

Points are allocated if the institution has a diversity or multicultural office that specifically addresses LGBTQ issues and/or if an LGBTQ student club exists.

- Ⓐ LGBTQ Office: 15 points
- Ⓐ Student Club: 15 points

### Extra Credit (10 points)

Points are allocated if the institution mentions LGBTQ and/or gender identity issues in any teacher education curricular material found online or if the website features a notable, recent university-wide "special event" includes LGBTQ issues.

### Anti-LGBTQ (-25 points)

Points are deducted if the institution has lifestyle statements, covenants, or mission documents that actively discriminate, dehumanize and/or marginalize LGBTQ individuals and communities.



## Summary of Results

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When examining the report cards, the most conspicuous finding is the overwhelming number of failing grades. Seventy-two percent of the programs evaluated (41 out of the 57) received a grade of **F** – or a failing grade. Six programs received a **D**, eight a **C**, one a **B** and one, the University of Illinois at Chicago, an **A**. Although a few of the failing institutions (n = 4) received no points at all, the majority of the institutions received points because LGBTQ content and protections were visible in their institutions.

However, only a handful of institutions include gender identity in their anti-discrimination and student code of conduct statements. Additionally, only twenty institutions have an office that focuses on, or explicitly includes, LGBTQ concerns. In teacher education programs and departments, twenty include sexual orientation, and only one includes gender identity in its conceptual framework or disposition statements. As this report focuses on (and weights accordingly), these statements in teacher education programs, the absence of these terms specifically impacts programs' grades.

Of note is that public institutions fared slightly better than private institutions. The majority of **C** and **D** grades went to public universities. Eastern Illinois University; Western Illinois University; Southern Illinois Carbondale and Edwardsville; Illinois State University; and the University of Illinois at Chicago, Springfield and Urbana all received grades above F.

We recognize that our methodology is limited and visibility cannot be gauged solely through materials available online. However, the web is an important source of information for students, and as an entry point for campus information, it is an appropriate starting point. Contact us for updates on your institution's report card ([info@illinoisafeschools.org](mailto:info@illinoisafeschools.org)).

## Recommendations, Conclusions and Future Directions

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We recognize that teacher education programs across Illinois have a range of resources, and are of varying size and scope. Yet resources and size are not barriers to including sexual orientation and gender identity in policies and public statements regarding diversity. Our findings indicate that all Illinois teacher education programs and the campuses of which they are a part can significantly improve their public attention to LGBTQ issues.

Some recommendations:

### Campus Wide

- ④ Work to ensure that campus-wide policies, e.g. non-discrimination, harassment, are inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity. (See Illinois Human Rights Act—775 ILCS 5/).
- ④ Conduct safe-zone trainings (Safe Zone Foundation at <http://safezonefoundation.tripod.com/id27.html>) for departments and other units across campus to educate people on sexual orientation and gender identity as well as campus climate issues affecting LGBTQ people/communities.
- ④ Advocate with administrators to include sexual orientation and gender identity in definitions of diversity.
- ④ Conduct a campus climate survey ([http://www.thetaskforce.org/reports\\_and\\_research/campus\\_climate](http://www.thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/campus_climate)) that assesses the campus climate for LGBTQ persons.

- ④ Establish an LGBTQ resource center or student group on campus; ask the campus diversity center to include LGBTQ content and rights.

## Education Programs

- ④ Make visible the practices in which you are already engaging that prepare educators to be knowledgeable about and advocate for LGBTQ youth and their families.
- ④ Ensure that sexual orientation and gender identity are included in all definitions of diversity.
- ④ Infuse sexual orientation and gender identity topics into multicultural education and diversity courses, child and adolescent development courses, and content area specific courses, such as English and history methods courses.
- ④ Ensure that conceptual framework and dispositions statements include sexual orientation and gender identity.
- ④ Utilize statements from national organizations, e.g. NCTE, AERA, to advocate for the inclusion of LGBTQ topics into the teacher preparation curriculum.
- ④ Find allies within the university as well as the community to help you advocate for changes within your teacher preparation program, e.g. students, families, and teachers from local schools, local and state LGBTQ organizations, local and state human rights organizations, teacher and faculty unions.
- ④ Network with other educators and teacher preparation professionals. Join the Pre-Professional Preparation Project (<http://www.illinoissafeschools.org/programs/public-education/>)!

To view the full report please visit [www.illinoissafeschools.org](http://www.illinoissafeschools.org)

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## Comprehensive Report Card Grades

Augustana College	F		McKendree College	D
Aurora University	F		Millikin University	C
Benedictine University	F		Monmouth College	F
Blackburn College	F		National-Louis University	F
Bradley University	F		North Central College	F
Chicago State University	F		North Park College	F
Columbia College	F		Northeastern Illinois University	F
Concordia University Chicago	F		Northern Illinois University	F
DePaul University	D		Northwestern University	F
Dominican University	F		Olivet Nazarene University	F
Eastern Illinois University	D		Principia College	F
Elmhurst College	F		Quincy University	F
Erikson Institute	F		Rockford College	F
Eureka College	F		Roosevelt University	D
Governor's State University	F		Saint Xavier University	F
Greenville College	F		School of the Art Institute of Chicago	B
Hebrew Theological College	F		Southern Illinois University-Carbondale	C
Illinois College	F		Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville	D
Illinois Institute of Technology	F		Trinity Christian College	F
Illinois State University	C		Trinity International University	F
Illinois Wesleyan University	F		University of Chicago	C
Judson University	F		University of Illinois at Chicago	A
Keller Graduate School of Management of DeVry University	F		University of Illinois at Springfield	C
Kendall College	F		University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	C
Knox College	C		University of Saint Francis	F

Lake Forest College	F
Lewis University	F
Loyola University Chicago	F
MacMurray College	D



Vanderbrook College of Music	F
Western Illinois University	C
Wheaton College	F

